

## **Historic, Archive Document**

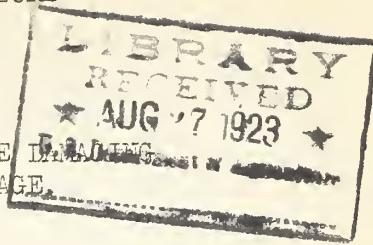
Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



Bi-717  
Aug. '23

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

METHOD OF POISONING BLACKBIRDS THAT ARE IMPAIRING  
CORN IN THE "MILK" OR "DOUGH" STAGE



Both the red-winged blackbird and the larger crow blackbird, or grackle, at times become very destructive to field or sweet corn when the grain is in the "milk" or "dough" stage. This damage occurs after the breeding season, when the birds have congregated into flocks that may contain many hundreds. At that time of the year, food in the form of various grains and uncultivated seeds and fruits, as well as insect life, is plentiful, with the result that poisoned baits are less likely to be eaten than at times of greater food scarcity. When, however, the birds have shown an inclination to feed in a localized area, successful results may be obtained. To a certain degree blackbirds possess that fear of a poisoned area so pronounced in the crow, and it frequently happens that one or two successful killings in a field will render it immune to blackbird attack for some time.

Poisoned bait, prepared by the following formula, has been found effective against blackbirds during periods of fair weather and may be used where local regulations permit:

Scratch feed or cracked corn .....	30 dry quarts.
Strychnine alkaloid (powdered) .....	1 ounce.
Starch paste .....	2 quarts.
(If dry cracked corn is used 3 quarts of paste will be needed.)	

Prepare the starch paste by first moistening about 4 tablespoonsfuls of laundry starch with a little cold water and then adding enough boiling water to make a paste of about the consistency of thin cream. The strychnine should be added to the starch paste, a process that may be facilitated by first mixing it with a small quantity of the paste, after which the remainder may be added. The poisoned starch paste should then be stirred into the bait and be well mixed, after which it should be spread out to dry.

This bait should be used only in portions of the cornfield where damage has been noticed. It may be scattered in every second or third row by holding a handful either at one side or behind and letting the grain filter slowly through the fingers while walking at a moderate pace. A handful is sufficient to cover about 50 linear feet of a row. Weedy sections should be avoided.

While chickens are quite immune to the effects of strychnine, other poultry should be kept out of baited fields. Few wild birds other than blackbirds and crows habitually feed in tall stands of corn, so that baits placed there are not likely to be picked up by harmless species.

